

# Memorial To Sandy Hook Victims Still Up For Discussion



A temporary memorial to the Sandy Hook Elementary shooting victims in Newtown on Jan. 3, 2013. (TIMOTHY A. CLARY / AFP/Getty Images)

By **Dave Altimari** *contact the reporter*

Sandy Hook shooting memorial still up for discussion

The question of where, or even whether, to build a permanent memorial to the 26 victims of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting is about to take center stage, with some victims' families opposed to the idea.

The 12-member Sandy Hook Permanent Memorial Commission will hold hearings on Jan. 20 and Jan. 29 at Newtown High School to get input from the public.



At a recent meeting of the state's Sandy Hook Advisory Commission, the mother of one of the 20 children killed two years ago said trying to get help has been at best confusing, and at worst impossible, for many families. ( DAVE ALTIMARI )

The group has held 13 meetings since it was formed last January and has had a presentation from the chairman of the 9/11 memorial commission. It has also sent surveys to residents and the families of those killed in the Dec. 14, 2012 school shooting.

Community input is the next step, commission Chairman Kyle Lyddy said.

"We really want to make sure that everyone gets a chance to have input on how we respectfully honor the 26 lives lost with something that is appropriate for our community," Lyddy said. "We want to make sure we do what is right. What is right for our community? I am still not sure."

It is unclear if there is consensus among victims' families — 18 responded to the questionnaire. Some family members on the memorial commission have acknowledged that there are some family members who want no memorial built.

"It has been tough because not all of the families are going to agree or want the same thing," Lyddy said. "Their responses have been very different. Some families have given us incredible input into what they want to see. More importantly, they have also given us input into what they don't want to see."

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At a recent commission meeting, Tricia Pinto, whose son Jack was killed, told other members that she updates the families monthly and that the families "have a wide range of ideas," according to the minutes of an Oct. 30 meeting.

Pinto added that "some families want a memorial and others do not." She said that some families are "still not ready to talk but as time goes on and if families see a memorial will be built ... they may want to talk."

In addition to the families, the commission also has sent out surveys to more than 600 individuals, including teachers from the Sandy Hook school, parents of students who were in the school the day of the shooting and first responders.

Through October, the commission had also received four responses from state police officers, nine from members of the Sandy Hook Fire Department and five from Newtown police officers.

There was far more response from teachers and parents of children at the school. Lyddy said the consensus from both groups was that there should be a memorial. Both groups agree that it should be outside in a secluded location.



NEWTOWN — Confounded with grief in the aftermath of the Sandy Hook tragedy, Yolie Moreno sat in the cold outside the town's most popular diner off busy I-84 holding a sign she said bore an important message. ( ALAINE GRIFFIN and JOSH KOVNER )

Following the massacre, the town received numerous gifts and ideas for memorials, including a 7-ton granite memorial from Maine that has been placed at St. John's Episcopal Church, funding for 26 pink granite benches and numerous donations of trees and equipment.

About six tractor-trailer truckloads of donated items — from sculptures to cranes — are being stored at Iron Mountain, a storage facility in East Hartford.

The town has already ground thousands of teddy bears and other stuffed animals that came to Newtown from all over the world into "sacred soil" that is available to be used in a memorial.

The commission has not chosen a location for a memorial, although town officials have made it clear that no permanent structure would be built at the new Sandy Hook Elementary School.

"We are starting the second half of our information-gathering stage, which will likely also include finding a location and picking a design," said Lyddy. He said that the commission is receiving input from other communities that have had mass shootings.

"We spoke to the people at Virginia Tech and they said the biggest mistake they made was not incorporating the survivors. So they went back and added that to the memorial," Lyddy said.

There also is no sense of cost. The commission has about \$80,000 in donations that came in after the massacre specifically for a memorial. In addition, another group called the Newtown Memorial Fund has raised more than \$1 million.

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